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A

POEM.

To the MEMORY of

Mrs. *OLDFIELD.*

Inſcrib'd to the Honourable

Brigadier Charles Churchill.

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A

POEM.

To the MEMORY of

Mrs. *OLDFIELD.*

O *LDFIELD*'s no more!—And can the Muſe forbear,
O'er *Oldfield*'s Grave to ſhed a grateful Tear?
Shall ſhe, the Glory of the *Britiſh* Stage,
Pride of her Sex, and Wonder of the Age;
Shall ſhe, who living charm'd th' admiring Throng,
Die undiſtinguiſh'd, and not claim a Song?
No. Feeble as it is, I'll boldly raiſe
My willing Voice to celebrate her Praiſe,
And with her Name immortalize my Lays.
Had but my Muſe her Art to touch the Soul,
Charm ev'ry Senſe, and ev'ry Pow'r controul.

I'd

I'd paint her as ſhe was ——— the Form divine,
Where ev'ry lovely Grace united ſhine ;
A Mein, majeſtick as the Wife of *Jove*,
An Air, as winning as the Queen of *Love* ;
In every Feature rival Charms ſhould riſe,
And *Cupid* hold his Empire in her Eyes.
O ! ſhe was more than Numbers can expreſs,
Creation's Darling in her faireſt Dreſs.
A Form ſo charming, with ſuch Beauties fraught,
As might have nigh excus'd the Want of Thought;
And yet a Mind with ſuch Perfections ſtock'd,
As made the Beauties of her Form o'er look'd.
A Soul with ev'ry Elegance refin'd,
By Nature, and the Converſe of Mankind,
Wit, which could ſtrike aſſuming Folly dead;
And Senſe——which temper'd every thing ſhe ſaid ;
Judgment, which ev'ry little Fault could ſpy ;
But Candor, which would paſs a Thouſand by.
That native Force——that Energy of Mind,
Which left the toiling Pedant far behind.
Such finiſh'd Breeding, ſo polite a Taſte,
Her Fancy always for the Faſhion paſt :
So ſweetly ſerious, ſo diſcreetly gay,
None went unpleas'd, or unimprov'd away.
And yet ſo negligent ſhe ſeem'd of Fame,
As if ſhe thought Applauſe beneath her Aim.
Diſdaining Flattery, ſhe was ſtill ſincere;
Warm to approve, and modeſtly ſevere.
Whilſt every ſocial Virtue fir'd her Breaſt,
To help the Needy, ſuccour the Diſtreſt,

A Friend to all in Miſery ſhe ſtood.
And her chief Pride was plac'd in doing Good.
But ſay, ye Few, ye happy Few, who e'er
Enjoy'd the private Friendſhip of the Fair;
Who ſaw the Charmer in a nearer Light,
All open, free, and unreſerv'dly bright;
Who felt the Raptures which her Smiles beſtow'd,
And prov'd the Joys which from her Converſe flow'd:
Oh ſpeak her friendly, affable, and mild,
Brave, generous, firm, by no falſe Shows beguil'd.
With ev'ry Art and Talent form'd to pleaſe,
The Scholars Learning, and the Ladies Eaſe;
The Gay, the Grave, the Florid and Serene,
Mix'd in her Soul, and ſparkling in her Mein.
Thrice happy *Churchill!* who her Love could gain,
For whom ſo many Thouſands ſigh'd in vain;
Whoſe wondrous Charms made every one her Slave
Dear to the Wiſe, the Witty, and the Brave.
And juſtly did ſhe judge to place her Name
With thine, the greateſt in the Books of Fame.
Thus join'd, Advantages to each accrue,
Renown to her, Beauty and Wit to you.
Renown ſhould ever on the Fair One wait,
And Beauty be the Portion of the Great,
From ſuch a Pair we well may hope to ſee
Another *Malbro'*, *Charles*, appear in thee.
But now, my Muſe, the arduous Task engage,
And ſhow the Charming Figure on the Stage,
Deſcribe her Look, her Action, Voice and Mein,
The gay Coquette, ſoft Maid, or haughty Queen,

So bright ſhe ſhone in every different Part,
She gain'd deſpotick Empire o'er the Heart,
Knew how each various Motion to controul,
Sooth every Paſſion, and ſubdue the Soul :
As ſhe, or gay, or ſorrowful apears,
She claims our Mirth, or triumphs in our Tears :
Whilſt from her Eyes deluſive Sorrows flow,
Our Breaſts are touch'd with undiſſembled Woe ;
Or if Ambition calls her forth to Arms,
The Thirſt of Glory every Boſom warms ;
No Souls ſo ſenſeleſs but what felt her Flame,
Nor Breaſt ſo ſavage but her Art could tame.
Ev'n the Pert Templer, and the City Prig,
Who come to Plays to ſhow their Wit——or Wig.
The ſnarling Critick, and the ſneering Beau,
Who neither Senſe of Worth, or Manners know,
Aw'd by her Looks their Brutiſh Din forbear,
And for a while a little Human are,
So *Orpheus* charm'd the Savages of old,
And all Hell's Furies with his Harp controul'd.
Painters may sketch the Image of a Face,
And Sculptors Form and Attitude expreſs ;
Poets the Graces of the Mind relate,
And Hiſt'ry tells the Actions of the Great.
Still each wants ſomething to compleat the Whole,
The Poet wants a Form, the Painter Soul.
But *Oldfield* all the Heroine diſplay'd,
Show'd how ſhe look'd, ſhe mov'd, ſhe wept, ſhe pray'd
And was herſelf the Character ſhe play'd,
When *Cleopatra*'s Form ſhe choſe to wear,
We ſaw the Monarch's Mien, the Beauty's Air ;

Charm'd

Charm'd with the Sight, her Cauſe we ſtrait approve,
And like her Lover, gave up all for Love;
Antony's Fate, inſtead of *Cæſar's*, chuſe,
And wiſh for her, we had a World——to loſe.
But when a more familiar Part did pleaſe,
Letitia's Artifice, or *Townley*'s Eaſe
Each Beauty in the fineſt Light ſhe plac'd,
Improv'd each Charm, and every Action grac'd.
Nay, ſo enchanting was her lovely Frame,
She ſpoilt, againſt her Will, the Poet's Aim;
Making thoſe Follies which we ſhould deſpiſe,
When ſeen in her, ſeem Virtues in our Eyes.
So, when with *Cytherea*'s Girdle bound,
The homelieſt Hag, a ſhining Fair is found.
But now the gay delightful Scene is o'er,
And that ſweet Form muſt glad the World no more;
Relentleſs Death has ſtop'd the tuneful Tongue,
And clos'd thoſe Eyes, for all but Death too ſtrong;
Blaſted that Face where every Beauty bloom'd,
And to eternal Reſt the graceful Mover doom'd.
Calm and ſerene ſhe met the fatal Hour,
Smil'd at Death's Terrors, and contemn'd its Power.
Suſtain'd unmov'd the cruel Scourge of Pain.
Whilſt blund'ring Doctors try'd their Art in vain;
(Thoſe lawful Executioners, whoſe Skill
Is ſhown not when they cure——but when they kill.)
She only griev'd to ſee her *Churchill* grieve,
And for his Sake alone deſir'd to live?
Her long-impriſon'd Soul rejoyc'd to ſee
The wiſh'd-for Moment come to ſet it free;

Then

Then bravely ſtrugling leapt its Bounds of Day,
And to the Place from whence it came, impetuous wing'd
its Way.
Thus ſubterranean Fire in *Ætna* pent,
Which long in vain has labour'd for a Vent,
(When once ſome weaker Part begins to yield
Its long reſiſted Enemy the Field)
Grows more enrag'd, with double Fury plays,
And once got Air, it mounts into a Blaze.
O'ercharg'd with Sorrow at the Thought—the Muſe
Drooping———no more her airy Flight purſues;
With *Oldfield* all her flattering Hopes are fled,
In her the Muſes deareſt Friend is dead:
For lo! the ſinking Stage attends her Fall,
Whilſt Opera, Farce, and Trick prevail o'er all,
Wilks, Nature's Maſter, ſoon, by Years oppreſt,
And tir'd with Buſ'neſs, muſt retire to Reſt;
And *Cibber*, baulk'd by the ungrateful Town,
Will lay th'unprofitable Burthen down,
Mourn then ye Muſes, all your Sorrows vent;
Your Shafts are uſeleſs, and your Bows unbent.
Now weep, ye Forreſts; droop, ye ſhady Bowers;
Be dry, ye Fountains; ſicken all ye Flowers;
The Night of univerſal Ign'rance comes,
In Darkneſs e'ry pleaſing Scene entombs;
With *Oldfield* the laſt Glympſe of Light is fled,
Wit, Nature, Senſe, with her their Exits made:
The Goddeſs *Dulneſs* lifts her cloudy Head,
And ſmiles to ſee her dark Dominions ſpread,
Chaos o'er all his Leaden Scepter rears,
And not one Beam throughout the Gloom appears.

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